



Director's Rule

Title Customer Billing, Payments, and Collections	Number CS-310.1	Rev. no. ((0)) <u>1</u>
Responsibility Customer Service Branch	Supersedes N/A	Pages 4
SPU Director's Approval	Effective Date	

1. PURPOSE

This Director's Rule establishes the administrative process for the billing, payment, and collection of charges for water, wastewater, and solid waste services to customers of Seattle Public Utilities. It conforms with Seattle Municipal Code provisions under SMC 21.04, 21.28, SMC 21.40 and SPU policy CS-310.

2. DEFINITIONS

Account Balance: The total dollar amount owing on an account, which includes current charges, past due balances, late fees, delinquency penalties, returned-check fees, and charges for property visits, shutoffs, meter removals, turn-ons, and resets that have been applied to the account.

Account Fees: Charges to an account made in accordance with Director's Rule FIN-210.2, Standard, Connection, and Administrative Charges, which include late fees, delinquency penalties, returned-check fees, and charges for property visits, shutoffs, meter removals, turn-ons, and resets that have been applied to the account.

~~((**Account Status:** Utility accounts may be: (a) "active," which means the account is open and billing regularly or (b) "inactive," which means the account is closed and not billing regularly.))~~

Bill: The monthly or bi-monthly statement of charges accrued for water, sewer and garbage service. The Bill is the official notice to the property owner, his or her agent, or designated account holder that payment is due.

Certified Funds: Cash, cashier's check, money order, ~~((or debit or credit card))~~ Visa or Master Card ~~((only))~~ debit or credit card.

~~((**Delinquent Account:** An account that does not have a Payment Arrangement and whose Account Balance has not been paid in full within 21 days of the bill date.))~~

~~((**Delinquent Account Fees:** Charges to a Delinquent Account made in accordance with Director's Rules FIN-210.1 and FIN-210.2, Standard, Connection, and Administrative Charges, including late fees, delinquent penalties, returned-check fees, and charges for property visits, shutoffs, water restorations, meter removals, turn-ons, and meter resets.))~~

Past Due Balance: ~~((The portion of the Account Balance which))~~ Unpaid debt from a single bill or multiple bills that was not paid by the ~~((payment))~~ due date specified on the bill(s).

Pay ~~((ment Arrangement))~~ Plan: An agreement between SPU and the property owner, his or her agent, or designated account holder, ~~((which prevents collection action by allowing payments to be made on the Account Balance in scheduled installments that do not exceed a period of 60 days beyond the date the request is made.))~~ used to satisfy a current or outstanding debt. To be granted a pay plan, customers must make an initial down payment and commit to subsequent payment(s) to satisfy the remaining balance within 30 calendar days from the date of the initial down payment is made.

3. **RULE**

A. Billing for Services

- 1) SPU bills for utility account services on a monthly or bi-monthly basis, depending on account type.

~~((As of July 15, 2011,))~~ SPU requires ~~((all new residential))~~ that utility accounts be established in the legal property or parcel owner's name.

~~((Residential accounts established in the name of a tenant prior to July 15, 2011 will be converted back to the property owner's name at the time the tenant moves and closes the utility account.))~~ Property owners will be sent the original bills and notices to their provided mailing address. However, upon request, property owners can request that duplicate bills and notices be sent to the occupants of a rental property.

- 2) Bills are provided by either of the following:
 - a. Mailing to the property owner, the owner's agent, or account holder of record.
 - b. Online, if the property owner, the owner's agent, or designated account holder is enrolled in SPU's electronic billing service.
- 3) Property owners are responsible for:
 - a. Providing SPU with accurate, reliable, and up-to-date contact information.
 - b. Notifying SPU within 10 business days of the exact date of a change in ownership.

B. Payments

- 1) Payment is due within 21 days of the bill date. Payments are first applied to the amount due for solid waste collection, then to sewer, and finally to water services.
- 2) Payment may be made by different means, such as cash, check, debit card or credit card. If a payment made by check is returned, SPU will charge a returned-check fee and require cash or certified funds be used to pay the balance due.
- 3) If payment made by Visa or MasterCard is returned, SPU will require cash, a cashier's check, or a money order be used to pay the balance due.

C. ~~((Notices))~~ Delinquency Notifications

SPU will ~~((send notices to))~~ notify customers whose accounts ~~((are))~~ become delinquent. Depending on the amount of the outstanding balance and the number of days the

outstanding balance is delinquent, one or more of the following SPU collections and severance processes may occur.

1) Reminder Calls:

Auto-generated phone calls are made to the account holder to inform them of their past due balance.

2) **Urgent Notice:** ~~((This notice is generated once the account's Past Due Balance and number of days past the payment due date on the Bill meet SPU criteria for potential shutoff.))~~

~~Once an Urgent Notice is generated, ((a minimum of 50 percent of the total Past Due Balance in Certified Funds must be paid and a Payment Arrangement must be established to pay the remainder within 60 days.))~~ customers can either pay their past due balance in full or pay a minimum of 50 percent of their past due balance in certified funds and establish a pay plan to pay the remaining past due balance within 30 calendar days from the date the 50 percent down payment is made.

3) **((Final)) Shutoff Notice:** ~~((This notice is generated once the account's Past Due Balance and number of days past the payment due date on the Bill meet SPU criteria for potential shutoff.))~~

~~Once a Shutoff Notice is generated, customers can either pay their past due balance in full, or pay a minimum of 75 percent of their total past due balance in certified funds, ((must be paid and a Payment Arrangement must be established to pay the remainder within 60 days.))~~ and establish a pay plan to pay the remaining balance within 30 calendar days from the date the 75 percent down payment is made.

D. Water ~~((Off Status)) Shut Off (Severance)~~

If water services have been shut off for nonpayment, ~~((Payment Arrangements))~~ pay plans are no longer allowed. To restore water services, the property owner, his or her agent, or designated account holder must pay 100 percent of the past due balance ~~((and Delinquent Account Fees))~~ in certified funds.

E. Pay ~~((ment Arrangements)) Plans~~

~~Pay ((ment Arrangements)) Plans are offered ((as a)) to assist customers ((courtesy to help prevent financial penalty and interruption of water service by allowing payments to be made in installments subject to the provisions below:))~~ in satisfying debt owed to the utility. Specific criteria must be met before a pay plan can be established. Pay plan guidelines are listed below:

- ~~1) ((Customers can request payment arrangements by contacting SPU by telephone or in person. The utility Account Status must be active. SPU will not accept a Payment Arrangement on an inactive account.~~
- ~~2) The payment terms of each established payment arrangement must not exceed 60 calendar days from the date the utility is contacted.~~

- 3) ~~The account must be kept current by paying all new utility charges in full by the payment due date specified on the bill. Otherwise, the Payment Arrangement will be automatically terminated by SPU's billing system.))~~
- 4) ~~If ((a customer has an Account Balance and)) an Urgent Notice or ((Final)) Shutoff Notice has **not** ((yet)) been generated, a ((minimum)) pay plan can be granted if the customer pays a down payment of 25 percent of their account balance ~~((must be paid))~~ in certified funds. ~~((before a payment arrangement can be established))~~ The remaining balance must be paid in installments or in full within 30 calendar days from the date the down payment is made.~~
- 5) ~~If a customer needs to change((s to)) the terms of an existing ((Payment Arrangement)) pay plan, they will be required ((all of)) to do the following:~~
 - a. ~~((Cancellation of the existing Payment Arrangement.))~~
 - b. ~~((Additional payment of)) Pay 25 percent of the ((Account)) balance owing within their existing plan in certified funds.~~
 - c. ~~((Payment of the new Account Balance within 60 calendar days from the date the additional 25 percent is paid.)) Agree to a date to pay the remaining pay plan balance in installments or in full within 30 calendar days from the date the down payment is made.~~
- 6) ~~If an Urgent Notice has been generated, a ((minimum)) pay plan can be granted if the customer pays a down payment of 50 percent of their ~~((total))~~ past due balance in certified funds. The remaining balance must be paid ~~((and a Payment Arrangement must be established to pay the remainder of the Past Due Balance within 60 days.))~~ in installments or in full within 30 calendar days from the date the down payment is made.~~
- 7) ~~If a Shutoff Notice has been generated, a ((minimum)) pay plan can be granted if the customer pays a down payment of 75 percent of their ~~((total))~~ past due balance ~~((must be paid))~~ in certified funds. The remaining balance must be paid in installments or in full within 30 calendar days from the date the down payment is made. ~~((and a Payment Arrangement must be established to pay the remainder within 60 days.))~~~~

F. ~~((Water ((Off Status))~~ Shut Off (Severance)

~~If water services have been shut off for nonpayment, ((Payment Arrangements)) pay plans are no longer allowed. To restore water services, the property owner, his or her agent, or designated account holder must pay 100 percent of the past due balance ~~((and Delinquent Account Fees))~~ in certified funds.))~~

G. Meter Removal

~~((If water services are shut off for nonpayment and the Past Due Balance has not been paid, SPU will send a meter removal letter to the last address of record provided by the property owner. The letter provides notification that the meter will be scheduled for removal in 10 calendar days from the date of the letter and a charge for removal will be applied.))~~

~~((After a))~~ If the water meter has been removed, water services will not be restored to the property until the property owner has completed a meter reset application and paid the entire Account Balance and meter reset fee in certified funds.

4. **AUTHORITY/REFERENCES**

- SMC 21.04, Water Rates and Regulations
- SMC 21.28, Wastewater Rates and Charges
- SMC 21.40, Solid Waste Collection Rates and Charges
- ~~((FIN-210.1 Standard, Connection and Administrative Charges Rule – Sewer))~~
- FIN-210.2 Standard, Connection and Administrative Charges Rule – Water